Digital Era in forensics:
Let's break the conventional stereotypes!!

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Taking the first steps are always the hardest, and fortunately, for our Journal of Indo-Pacific Academy of Forensic Odontology, a path has already been carved by our preceding worthy editorial teams for us to follow. As I embark upon this exciting journey as the Editor-in-Chief of our journal for the current tenure, I humbly submit that our team fully realizes the responsibility we have to uphold and uplift the standards set by our predecessors. We seek the blessings of our seniors and support from all members of our Academy to bring forth fresh ideas and perspectives to integrate conventional and contemporary practices for contributing quality scientific literature in the realm of forensics and forensic odontology.

We have seen a plethora of themes being published in in the previous issues in the form of primary and secondary literature. We intend to take it further from there. While our focus will be more on original primary research in the forthcoming issues, we do hope to transform majority of secondary research into evidence-based literature following stringent guidelines like international database registration and quality assessment of articles for critical appraisal. Relevant to the current times, upcoming research areas like digital forensics will be our key focus, and sections like techno-bytes will introduce the budding researchers with availability and use of sophisticated equipment in forensic research. We do believe that solving forensic civil and criminal matters today will require big data and setting standards for its collection and creating an indigenous data-bank may give huge boost to research as well as crime-solving in a diverse population as ours. The Government of India, in its digital India maneuvers, has also strengthened data-bank usage in crime-solving with several initiatives, including national data-bank for counter-terrorism, ABHA number for digital health records, and many more. (1) The health system is also coming up digital biomarkers, with web-based and smartphone-based applications using artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning for disease identification and progress, which may be applied to forensic scenarios. (2)

Our Indo-Pacific Academy has also taken constructive steps towards inclusion of components of digital forensics in the form of presentations on topics including dental age estimation, disaster victim identification, etc. in recent INPAFO conferences held in Nepal (2023)and Chandigarh (2022). Also, INPAFO introduced fellowship in Forensic Odontology in the year 2023 with academic assignments and lectures related to the use of digital data for strengthening forensic outcomes.

Dentistry, has digitized to a large extent in terms of electronic record-taking, 3-D intra-oral scans, digital radiographs, 3-D dental casts, 3-D stereophotogrammetry, and also use of various software for radiographic and photographic assessments. (3) This digital data is being used in plenty for diagnosis and decision-making using AI based algorithms and equations. These can be extremely useful in forensic research but are also plagued by nuances of unethical photo-editing or tampering of digital records, which also becomes an area of interest for the readers of this journal. (4)

"The success to making progress is to get started".

We firmly believe that this journal can make us take small steps in the right direction, with a sound basis of research and evidence, to help us build a safer environment for our coming generations. We urge all of you to come together with us and contribute in every way possible to elevate our set standards and think afresh!!

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